

# Ministry of Grace Church

## 1 Peter 2:9-2:17 - Speaker Notes

### Introduction

In the previous section of 1 Peter, we learned that we were “born-again,” not from corruptible seed, but from incorruptible seed. Since our second birth was produced by incorruptible seed, it will never end or fade away. And – one of the things that gives evidence of this new birth is that we have an insatiable hunger for the Word of God. If you have ever wondered whether or not you are really saved, then ask yourself, “Do I enjoy reading the Bible? Do I look forward to learning more about my God and developing a closer walk with Him? If you don’t answer with a resounding “Yes” to both of these questions, then Peter would question whether or not you are really saved.

Peter also told us that we are part of a sacred building, the church, the body of Christ. The church is being built on the foundation laid by the apostles, with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. The body of Christ is being built on the solid rock, the unmovable corner stone, and our purpose is to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God.

Jesus Christ certainly is the cornerstone of our lives but to the unsaved He is an offense, a cause for stumbling. If you ask almost any unsaved person, they will tell you that they don’t have any need for God and that “religion” is nothing more than a crutch for people who can’t handle life on their own. They think they don’t need Jesus. Boy will they be surprised when they appear before the Great White Throne and - they will wish they had listened to you.

Now, Peter will tell us that we were chosen by God and our purpose is to give praise to God. Why should we praise Him? There are a thousand reasons, but the first is probably the fact that He shows us mercy, not because we want Him to, but because He wants to! Therefore, since He shows us mercy, we are to live like citizens of heaven, not like earth dwellers, because our good conduct will bring glory to God.

Peter also gives us some guidelines on how we are to conduct our lives. First of all, we are to submit to whatever government we might live under. That may be difficult for those of us who live under a government that is not supportive of Christianity. But – consider that Peter was living under a government that was openly hostile to Christianity. And he doesn’t leave it there. He tells us that we are to submit to all authorities over us at all times, not just when it is convenient, or when we feel like it.

Okay, let’s dive back into Peter’s tough teaching and learn why we should do these things.

### 1 Peter 2:9-11a

**But you are a chosen family, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of god; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul, by keeping your conduct excellent among the Gentiles,**

The expression “chosen family” is from the Greek, *genos elekton*, which literally means “selected descendants” or “chosen family.” In other words, we were chosen to be part of God’s family.

In contrast to the previous verse where Peter talked about the unsaved being appointed to stumbling, here he refers to the saved as being chosen children. Peter, like the Apostle Paul writing in Ephesians and elsewhere, is not shy about teaching that we are chosen by God. As we have talked about before, the only indication of God’s criteria seems to be in 1 Corinthians:

For consider your calling, brothers, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may abolish the things that are, (1 Corinthians 1:26-28)

According to this passage, God chose us because we are foolish (not wise), we are weak (not mighty), and we are base (not noble). Or, as we have said before, we were chosen because we are stupid, feeble, pond scum. Nonetheless – we are God’s chosen children! Halleluia!

Peter says a couple of other very interesting things about us as well. We are a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Since we were adopted (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5) by the King of Kings when we were saved, we are now part of the Kingly family, and Peter already told us that as part of the church we are part of the priesthood, which makes us a kingly, or royal, priesthood. And, you may remember, the whole notion of holiness or sanctification carries with it the idea of being set-apart. Therefore, since we were baptized, or placed, into Christ when we were saved (Galatians 3:27), we have been set-apart from the unsaved.

The purpose of our being chosen, purchased, set-apart, and made priests according to Peter, is so that we might declare the praises of God who called us out of the darkness into His marvelous light. And - according to the Apostle Paul:

There is none that understands, there is none who seeks after God (Romans 3:11)

Therefore, if He had not called us out of the darkness, we would never have wandered out of it on our own accord. For this reason, and this reason alone, we should be proclaiming His praises. But beyond having chosen and called us, He has made us His own children and promised us a great inheritance! All this He did, as Paul says:

... while we were yet sinners ... (Romans 5:8a)

Prior to the time of Christ, the only people who were considered the people of God were the Israelites. In fact, there is a bit of a play on words in the previous verse. The word translated as “nation” here (holy nation) is the generic term for a race or a tribe and is the term that Israelites used for all Gentiles (those who are not Israelites). The Israelites believed that any Gentile was outside the choosing and blessing of God.

Here Peter is saying that we who had been considered outside the blessing of God, we who were not the people of God, we who were despised by the people of God - now **are** the people of God. We, who had not received mercy because we were outside of God’s chosen few, have now received mercy because we *are* His chosen few. Stop and think about that for a minute!

The prophet Hosea predicted this millennia ago when he said of God:

and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them who were not my people, You are my people; and they shall say, You are my God. (Hosea 2:23)

And, the Apostle Paul said it this way:

Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (Ephesians 2:11-14)

Some people believe that this doctrine of election produces lazy Christians. After all, if God chose me to be saved, doing all the work Himself, and He has promised never to lose me, all I have to do is sit back and enjoy life, right? But if we see it through Peter's eyes, we see how priceless the gift is, and we realize how unworthy we are. This should drive us to our knees in humble thanksgiving and cause us to lift our hands in praise to Him. It should also motivate us to serve Him in whatever capacity He has called us to, with determination and humility. Peter follows up this idea with:

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul ...

The word "urge" is an interesting one. It is the Greek word, *parakaleō* which is the verb form of a name given to the Holy Spirit, *paraclete* (translated "comforter"). It is a compound of *para*, meaning "alongside or near" and *kaleō*, which means "to call." Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the One who is "called alongside" with the idea of being the One who walks alongside us on a journey to keep us company and to counsel us. In the verb form, as used in today's verse, it carries the idea of a coach calling an athlete to him in order to give words of challenge, encouragement, and support.

One of the metaphors used throughout the Bible is that of being on a journey, walking through life. Peter is picking up on that metaphor here as he coaches us as people who don't really live here (on this earth) and who are not local residents (we are heavenly residents who are temporarily wandering through this land). The coach's message is to abstain from, that is to actively resist and keep ourselves away from, the lusts of the flesh that make war against our soul.

You may recall what the Apostle John said about this world we live in:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (1 John 2:16)

These things are not of God but of the world, and since we are not of this world (but sojourners and pilgrims here) we need to resist these local customs and keep ourselves pure like our Father.

There is a fine line between the desires that are a necessary part of us as human beings, and lusts, or overly strong desires, that control us if we do not control them. Peter is coaching us to resist these lusts even as we are bombarded daily by the customs and attitudes of the local residents (that's called advertizing). In other words, we need to resist being like the world around us. Peter now tells us why we should conduct ourselves righteously among the world.

### **1 Peter 2:11b-12**

**so that in the thing which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good works, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

The word translated “visitation” is *episkopē*, which is made up of *epi*, meaning “on” or “over” and a form of *skopeō*, meaning “to give attention to.” It primarily refers to an inspection. Some scholars believe this refers to the day that God visits a person to open his or her eyes to the truth of the gospel. That is, the day they are “saved.” Others, however, believe that this refers to the day when God will judge the unbelievers. Since the term primarily refers to an inspection, it is more likely that Peter is referring to this Day of Judgment. Remember, when God inspects us at the Bema Seat Judgment, He will be only looking for good, and we will be rewarded for what He finds. With the unsaved, however, He will be looking for any reason that they should be accepted into heaven, and He will not find any!

In the previous verse we learned that Peter is telling us we need to exert our will to keep ourselves away from (or abstain from) fleshly lusts. Now he tells us that we should exhibit “excellent” conduct, or behavior. To put this another way, we need to avoid letting our lusts control us and we need to behave in a manner that is generally regarded as excellent. And in whose presence are we to behave this way? The Gentiles.

“Wait a minute,” you say, “I thought Gentiles were non-Jews?” The word translated Gentiles in this verse is *ethnos*. Back in verse 9 we talked about the fact that God has made us a “holy nation” The word translated “nation” in that verse is this same Greek word, *ethnos*. It means “a race of people” or “a nation of people,” and Peter is using it here in the vernacular sense of those who are not of us or, more specifically, those who are not Christians. We are to live an exemplary life, a life without reproach, in front of the unsaved.

The reason, according to Peter, is that in living this way we may, by our good works, cause the unbelievers to glorify God in the day of visitation. These same people who deride us and treat us with disregard or contempt will give God glory one day. We are to live a righteous life as an example to the world (the unsaved).

We are to live this way so that God will receive praise and glory.

## **1 Peter 2:13-17**

**Be subject for the sake of the Lord to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do good. For such is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as slaves of God. Honor all people, love the brethren, fear God, honor the king.**

The verb translated “be subject” is *hupotassō*, a compound word made up of *hupo*, meaning “under” or “beneath” and *tassō*, meaning “to place in an orderly fashion.” Therefore, it means to place something in an orderly manner under something else. This is actually a military term that implies being placed in rank under the authority of someone else. It is expressed here in the passive voice indicating action done to the subject, and it is expressed in the imperative mood indicating a command. Putting this all together we see that Peter is ordering us to be submitted to human government.

Throughout history the Israelites have refused submission to any monarch, whether called king, emperor, caesar, or any other name. Theirs was a theocracy ruled by God rather than a monarchy ruled by man. Peter, however, is telling the early believers (many of them, new converts from Judaism), and those of us in the following millennia, that it is God’s will for us to submit to human

government. Even Christ, Himself, declared this in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke when asked whether it is lawful to give tribute to Caesar:

Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.  
(Matthew 22:21b)

The thing that makes Peter's message all the more important is the fact that Nero was ruling over the Roman world at the time he wrote this, and Nero hated Christians. Peter does not declare that we are to submit only to the laws that are fair to Christians, but to every ordinance of man.

The only exception to this type of submission is when human government orders us to do that which is contrary to the commands of God. For example, when Peter and John were commanded by the rulers of the Jews to cease preaching Jesus as the Messiah, they refused:

And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:18-20)

This is a hard lesson for us to hear in a society where morality is declining and many (perhaps most) of our government officials have no fear of God. What we need to keep in mind is that God is in control, and He will prevail.

Peter says that we should submit to Kings, but we should also submit to other government officials. The point is that we need to submit ourselves to anyone who has been set up by the king as a sub-ruler. In the first century these would include such people as Pontius Pilate and Herod, whom Christ submitted himself to, and Felix and Festus, whom the Apostle Paul submitted himself to.

Submission is something that is frowned upon by our society, and the message proclaimed by the media today is to do your own thing, to stand up for your rights (after all, I'm worth it). That, according to the world system, is the way to happiness and peace. The Bible, on the other hand, says that the way to happiness and peace is to submit, first to God, then to others. What is seen as weakness by the world is the way to peace and happiness with God. Christ, Himself, was the supreme example of this as Peter will point out later in this chapter.

Peter then says, "For such is the will of God..." What is he referring to? The punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do well? That's what he said in the previous verse. The grammatical rule of immediate antecedence would seem to dictate that's what he meant. However, it is not what was said before, but what is said after that defines what Peter means. He says that "putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men" is the will of God (what God has determined). And he does that through our good works. Now, let me remind you what he said in verse twelve:

having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12)

Do you see it? Do you see who Peter is talking about? As you will recall, in verse twelve we learned that the "Gentiles" are the non-Christians. They are the unsaved. They are unbelievers. They are the foolish ones who are "without understanding." And since they don't understand the truth of the gospel message, they speak out of ignorance. They speak out against Christians, calling us evil doers when they are the real doers of evil.

Not only will God silence (muzzle) their evil speaking about us, as Peter tells us, but they will glorify God on that fateful day when they stand before Him as their judge, as Peter told us in verse twelve. One day, all people will glorify God.

Peter now touches briefly on a subject that was the root of one of the earliest heresies of the church and which is still misunderstood today. That heresy was called *antinomianism*, which literally means “no law-ism.” Some in the early church believed that since we have been set free from the penalty of sin, we can live however we want, since all of our sins have been forgiven. Because of the sacrifice of Christ, we are free from the law of commandments contained in ordinances and free from sin, this is true. But - being free **from** sin does not mean that we are free from all laws (as Peter just pointed out) nor does it mean that we are free **to** sin.

The word “free” is translated from *eleutheros*, meaning “unrestrained” or “able to move about freely.” It is used primarily in reference to a person who is not a slave (not owned by anyone) but free to go wherever he or she pleases. To be a free man and not a slave (or servant) in the first century was a very privileged position. Peter’s use of this word, however, is in reference to the bondage of the Law of Moses. Many of the early converts to Christianity were former Jews who were bound heavily by the Law and who have now been set free from that as well. Peter is warning that this freedom is not to be used as an excuse to do evil things.

According to Greek grammar, the word “free” (literally, free ones) is tied back to the word “submit” in verse thirteen. So, what Peter is telling his readers is that Christians are to voluntarily submit to the civil authorities even though we have freedom in Christ. We are not to use that freedom to resist authority or to do evil deeds. Instead, we are to do good deeds in submission to the authorities over us, because our freedom from the penalty of sin also means that we are permanent slaves of God.

According to Peter, this is how we should conduct our lives while here on this earth. We are not to be contrarians, against everything everyone else stands for, rather we are to live as obedient servants representing well the One who has called us and to Whom we belong.

We are to honor each person with the specific honor due him or her. We are to continually demonstrate self-sacrificing love to others (not just Christians), being more concerned for their welfare than we are for our own. This characteristic has distinguished Christians from all other people throughout the centuries since the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

We are also to continually fear God (both in the sense of being in awe of Him and fearing His position and power). And we are to continually honor those in civil authority over us. The apostle Paul said a very similar thing in his letter to the Christians in Rome:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ... Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1, 7)

## **So What?**

If you are a born-again Christian, then God has chosen you to be His child and has set you apart from the rest of mankind so that you might proclaim His praises. If so, praise God for His great love with which He loved us, and chose us, and sanctified us! Praise Him now!

Give praise to God who has drawn us to Himself out of the darkness into His marvelous light and has declared us righteous through faith. Through His grace, we have the greatest gift of all, and we don't deserve it at all!

Now, what are you going to do about it? Here's what we should do: we should stand fast and resist, keeping ourselves holy because our Heavenly Father is holy, and work hard to reflect the family image. Let us be lights in the midst of darkness. Let us be witnesses, not by using condemning words, but by showing our kindness to others and by demonstrating our abstinence from the lusts of the flesh.

We are not here on this earth to do great things for ourselves; we are here to serve Him. Let us strive to live humble, godly lives and do good works, not for ourselves, but for God so that He will be glorified! After all, He is worthy!

One of the problems with submitting to human government is the fact that it is made up largely of unsaved men and women. Some of them are even openly opposed to the ideals which we hold so dear. Nonetheless, we are to submit to them and give them the honor that is due their position.

Our Christian lives are not to be characterized by "being free to live like the Devil," rather they are to be characterized by voluntarily submitting ourselves and our will to the one who purchased this freedom for us.

### **Challenge**

Let me challenge each of you to stop right now and take stock of how you behave toward others. In order to honor God, do you treat all people with respect, independent of their appearance? In order to honor God, do you demonstrate that special self-sacrificing love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ? In order to honor God, do you have a holy fear of our God? And, in order to honor God, do you show respect to civil authorities? Hmmmm!

Let's pray.